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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 001332

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA  
ALSO FOR IO ACTING A/S HOOK AND PDAS WARLICK  
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/SCHEDLBAUER  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/YERGER/MCDERMOTT

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SUBJECT: LEBANON: GEMAYEL URGES WASHINGTON SHOCK TREATMENT  
FOR SLEIMAN

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) While at the Embassy to renew his visa, former President Amine Gemayel stopped by for a meeting with Ambassador and ConOff on September 10. Gemayel discussed his upcoming trip to the United States, the National Dialogue, the 2009 parliamentary elections, Syria, Israel, and possible talking points for President Bush for his first meeting with Lebanese President Michel Sleiman. End summary.

TRIP TO THE US

2. (C) Gemayel plans to travel to New York during UNGA from September 23 to September 26, with a possible stop in Washington on September 26. He is scheduled to meet with Palestinian President Mahjud Abbas to discuss Lebanon and possibly meet UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

NATIONAL DIALOGUE

3. (C) Gemayel welcomed President Sleiman's September 9 announcement to begin the National Dialogue and said his Kataeb party would participate. At the same time, Gemayel was pessimistic that the National Dialogue would achieve anything substantive. "As long as there are two states, two armies, two independent infrastructures, how can you build national peace?" he asked. Gemayel said it was clear Hizballah was not ready to surrender its arms. According to Gemayel, the best that could be achieved from the National Dialogue would be a continuation of the political "ceasefire."

LEAD UP TO ELECTIONS

4. (C) Gemayel expressed great concern over the fate of March 14 and its allies as it gears up for the 2009 parliamentary elections. The current government could easily be out of power if the opposition gains five to ten percent more seats, which is likely if Syria influences the election, he noted. Gemayel lamented that the majority and the opposition were not playing on a level field. The opposition, led by Hizballah, was not only a political organization, fighting with ideas, but also a well-funded militia fighting with

weapons to gain power. He accused Hizballah, through the patronage of Iran, of infiltrating the different confessional groups, Christian, Druze, and Sunni, to increase its influence.

15. (C) In view of Iran and Syria's support for the opposition, Gemayel said Lebanon's friends (i.e. the U.S., France, and Saudi Arabia) needed to reevaluate their support for the majority. He said that if the majority loses the next election, it would be because it was defeated by "others" (i.e. foreign powers). He asked the Ambassador if the USG wanted to see pro-Syrian politicians like Abdel Rahim Mrad as Lebanon's next prime minister, or Wiam Wahhab as its next foreign minister.

#### ISRAEL AND SHEBA'A FARMS

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16. (C) Gemayel expressed confusion over Israel's policies toward Hizballah. On the one hand, Israel recently participated in a prisoner exchange with Hizballah, which provided the group an enormous propaganda victory. And on the other, it was making bellicose threats if Hizballah came to power and controlled the government.

17. (C) On the issue of Sheba'a Farms, Gemayel advocated indirect negotiations, through a third party, with Israel. He said he would continue to advocate for these negotiations despite Prime Minister Siniora's opposition to any type of negotiations with Israel over Sheba'a Farms.

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#### SYRIA

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18. (C) Despite Syria's recent attempts at rapprochement with the international community, Gemayel remained circumspect of Damascus' intentions and described its moves as simply "maneuvers." Gemayel said he did not believe Syria was ready for peace and, given a politically weak Israeli government and the current US administration nearing the end of its term, there would be a major shift in Syrian policy in the region. Gemayel reiterated a regular March 14 line of prodding the international community to influence Syria with more sticks and less carrots.

#### SLEIMAN'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BUSH

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19. (C) Gemayel suggested that President Bush deliver a firm message of support and strength to President Sleiman when they meet. Gemayel said Sleiman, who he believes is still close to Syria, must be encouraged to be more independent and keep equal distance from all parties. President Bush should advise Sleiman against any conciliatory gestures towards Syria or Iran, said Gemayel. If Sleiman does not stand up against Syria, Gemayel warned, he could end up like former president Emile Lahoud. Gemayel added that Sleiman should be made to fear the prospect of a Syrian and Iranian-controlled, Hizballah-led government. President Bush should convince Sleiman that the U.S. is dedicated to Lebanon's independence and that the USG would "go to any lengths" to protect Lebanon from becoming a Syrian or Iranian satellite state, Gemayel urged.

SISON